

Forget To Be Happy by ThatCharmspeakingGirl

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Genre: Cause that just works better, F/M, In this world Max and Billy are from Indianapolis, Slow Burn, Spoilers season 1 and 2, slight AU

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Characters: Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things), Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Original Character, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Original Character(s), Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Original Character(s)

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Summary:

When Alexa and her family move to Hawkins, she's kind of forgotten that Billy Hargrove will also be there. To be honest it's more like she repressed it, really.

Forget To Be Happy

“Imagine this honey, you’ll have an entire school full of people that potentially could be your friends, you don’t have to make a scene about this every single day.”

“Of course you wouldn’t understand, I had perfectly fine friends back home!” Sophie exclaimed exasperatedly, looking at the car seat in front of her like it had personally offended her.

“And as I have said before, I’m sorry about that, but there was no other option. We have to move.” Emilia Clark sighs, having had to put up with this for weeks now.

“But to such a tiny village? You said it was a promotion, then why aren’t they putting you in a bigger city overseeing a bigger staff? Makes no sense if you ask me.” The little girl continued.

“No one did ask you Sophie. I get that you’re upset, but there is no reason for you to complain about it in every single conversation. We’ve been over this, the big boss decided I’d be better suited here, and I get a pay raise. This will be good for all of us, end of discussion.”

Alexa looked towards her sulking little sister in the back seat. She was miraculously looking even more sour than when they left their old house. Her mother glances at her. “See Sophie, you don’t see your sister complaining, why don’t you follow her example?”

Alexa was indeed not complaining, just looking out of the window, streaked with the rain that was pouring down all around the car, soaking into the road and lush forest. She didn’t bother acknowledging their argument—it was getting quite repetitive. Their surroundings had been the same for the last hour, ever since they had exchanged the highway for the smaller roads leading to their destination. As it was the first Thursday of January, the fact that it was late afternoon meant that the overcast sky was already darkening. When the street lights turned on a little later they illuminated a road sign heralding their arrival in Hawkins, Indiana.

The town was really as small as Alexa had expected. On the way to their new house they passed a few stores, a small cinema, and what she assumed were Hawkins Middle and High. The house itself was not too bad. It just felt drab and empty without any of their stuff unpacked and boxes stacked up everywhere.

The following morning found the three of them hauled up in the car once again.

“At least the weather is better today, right?” Alexa hoped she sounded happy enough to make up for Sophie’s lack of enthusiasm.

“Are you sure you girls are okay coming with me to the lab?” Her mom gave her a look over her driving sunglasses as she got out of the car. “I know how you can get when you’re bored.”

Alexa smiled as she slid out of the front seat, hearing her little sister doing the same behind her, “I promise we won’t be trouble. I’m actually really curious about where you’re going to work, it must be something special if they have to get an FBI agent in to supervise some lab, right?”

Her mother’s voice took on a mildly disapproving tone, “You know I can’t tell you about what’s going on in there. You won’t be allowed into much of the complex either.”

“Yeah Alexa,” Sophie chimed in, “we’re not going to see anything exciting anyway, we could have just stayed home.”

“Come on Soph, aren’t you even a little bit curious? There is so much security here, they must be doing something important.”

Her mother looked towards the man walking up to them, quickly telling her daughters, “It’s no more than a research facility. Just don’t wander off.”

The man in the lab coat approaching them seemed to be in his late fifties. The smile on his face was a bit strained. He held out his hand to their mother. “Hello, I’m Dr Owens, the Director of Operations

here at Hawkins. You must be Mrs Clark, and who might these young ladies be?"

Emilia shook his hand. "Emilia Clark, nice to meet you. These are my daughters, Alexa and Sophie. They wanted to see where I work. There's not much to do in our house yet, and with the holiday break only being over on Monday I thought it would be good for them to get out of the house for a while before we do the unpacking."

Alexa smiled politely as she shook his hand as well. "I hope that isn't a problem sir?"

"No of course not. I am obliged, however, to inform you that without the proper security clearance you two will have to stay in the waiting room while I give your mother a tour of the complex."

Alexa tried to refrain her shoulders from sagging. She had hoped to at least catch a glimpse of the inner workings of the lab. Sophie used that time to give her an look that clearly said I told you so. "It won't take long right, mom? I want to call my friends when we get home." Alexa's sister said.

As they walked into the front door Alexa frowned. The whole place seemed normal, sterile even, but...

"Are those bullet holes?" Sophie asked indignantly. When she turned to the doctor, Alexa couldn't help but notice he seemed a little nervous.

"Ah, yes, there was an—accident—here a little over a month ago. Someone, uh, tried to gain unauthorised access into the lab with force, he seemed rather unstable if you ask me. One of those nutty conspiracy theorists claiming this whole lab was a government mind-controlling facility or something. Some wreckage was wrought, but no one was harmed, luckily."

Alexa was not her FBI-trained mother, but from the uncertain way he said it, she still got the sense he was not being completely honest with them.

The two girls were led to a bland waiting room. The paintings on the

wall were ugly and the fluorescent lights almost offensive in their brightness, but at least the chairs were comfortable.

“Thanks a lot Alex, now we’re stuck here for god knows how long!” Sophie seemed genuinely angry with her when her mother and Dr Owens had left.

“You’re thirteen years old, what important stuff could you possibly have at home? Everything is still in boxes, the only thing you could conceivably do is unpack them.”

Sophie fixed a glare at her, “I wanted to call my friends, or write them. I promised I’d write Jorina as soon as I’d arrive.”

Alexa dug around in her handbag. “If that’s all, I have some paper with me, you can write your letters.” Though Sophie didn’t bother to thank her, she gladly started writing. It was almost oppressively silent in the bright waiting room, excluding the scratching of pen on paper and an ominous humming sound that appeared to envelop them no matter where they had gone in the facility. Alexa grabbed the book she had brought along. It was nearly an hour later when anything happened. A few other people entered the waiting room; a woman that was probably in her late forties, two teenagers, of which one was a girl and one a boy, and a younger boy of around Sophie’s age.

As Alexa was taking this all in an employee walked in behind them. “Dr Owens will be with you shortly Mrs Byers,” before taking his leave. The group seemed surprised to see them sitting here. Alexa gave them a small wave from where she sat reading her book.

The teenage girl with the brown curls framing her face sat down closest to her, looking at the book Alexa was reading. “Nineteen Eighty-Four by George Orwell huh? Is it any good?”

“It’s probably my favourite book, along with Brave New World,” Alexa answered sheepishly. She continued with a grin, “Luckily not much of it has come true though, but there’s still hope for the new year.”

The guy with the shaggy hair, slumped in the chair next to the

brown-haired girl spoke up, "You never know, Big Brother might still be watching." After which the girl elbowed him in the ribs.

"Don't mind him, he's not in a great mood," the older woman said with a cordial smile. "How rude of us not to introduce ourselves, my name is Joyce Byers, and these are my sons Will and Jonathan, and his girlfriend Nancy. What are you kids doing around here?"

Alexa returned her smile. "I'm Alexa, this is my sister Sophie." She gestured to the girl next to her, still intently scribbling away, not at all interested in new people. "Come on Sophie, say hi."

To her credit, Sophie did look up with a vaguely articulated "Hi." When she noticed Will looked to be roughly the same age as her, she immediately showed more enthusiasm. "Do you go to Hawkins Middle?"

"Yeah, are you going there too?" Will asked. Sophie nodded.

"We just moved here from Indianapolis," Alexa continued. "We're waiting for our mom, she—"

At that moment Dr Owen walked back into the room. "Miss Clark, we just finished your mother's tour. She'll be waiting in the lobby. Mr Jackson will escort the two of you out." He gestured to a security guard behind him. He turned to the other group "Sorry I made you wait, Mrs Byers, you can come with me to my office now."

Alexa looked apologetically to their new acquaintances, "I guess I'll see you at school." She said to Jonathan and Nancy.

The next few days, the last days of the winter holiday, were spent getting the house in order for the Clark family. A few neighbours had come by to welcome them, leaving baked goods in their wake to "Help them settle in a little." As this obligated Mrs Clark to invite them into the, to Alexa's mother's embarrassment, still quite barren house, Alexa suspected the intruders just wanted to come in to get a good look at the new people in town. She had no doubt that something like that would be quite the news in a place like this. Even though Alexa and Sophie had a few days to get settled, Mrs Clark was

already making long days at the lab, getting things in order. What those things were, Alexa didn't know, because of course they were kept out of everything and weren't told anything of importance. She suspected her mother's transfer had something to do with the bullet holes in the lobby of the lab and the possible lies Dr Owen tried to explain them with, but she couldn't be sure. On Saturday, Alexa and sister took a walk to get a feel of it the towns and stock up on some groceries, but they quickly noticed that there wasn't much to see without anyone to tell them the ins and outs.

When Monday finally rolled around, Alexa was both glad to leave the house after being cooped up in it over the weekend, and at the same time anxious for the dreaded first day of school. She looked at the mirror she had painstakingly attached to the wall above the sink of the bathroom the day before. She smoothed the upper layer of her blond hair back, pinning it in place with a mother-of-pearl hairclip she had nicked from her mother's jewellery box ages ago. She'd be the first to admit that the outfit she was wearing made her look uptight. The knee length skirt might have looked okay if paired with anything but the pastel sweater and heavy tights underneath, but "okay" wasn't what she was going for. Alexa had exchanged her beloved jeans and flannel shirts for pastel dresses and girly updos and pink nailpolish in her last few months in Indianapolis, when life there as the old her became unbearable. She'd hoped it would make a difference, but of course it didn't. No one had bought the change of heart then, because they knew her longer than that, but this was Hawkins; a new town, new people that would see in her nothing else than the first impression she showed them. She'd be different than last year; this year she'd be placid, collected, well-put together. And who knew? Maybe she would even score a good college application out of it.

"Alexa, hurry up! If you don't come down to eat your breakfast right now you're going to make you and your sister late for school!" Sounded her mother's voice from the staircase. It was an effort not to roll her eyes.

She quickly grabbed her bag from her room, packed with the books the school secretary had told her to buy and the gym uniform she dreaded wearing, and headed downstairs.

"That's disgusting Soph, can you please eat with your mouth closed," was the first thing that left her mouth as she took place at the dinner table, "you're already turning me off breakfast." Of course that only prompted the girl to produce more noise ingesting the last part of her sandwich. Alexa scrunched up her nose before taking a bite off her apple, pouring herself some orange juice.

"I'm going to have to work till at least six every day, so you'll be a darling and bring Sophie to school and pick her up after, all right honey?" Her mother said only half paying attention while stuffing some folders into her briefcase.

"Yeah sure. At least the schooldays both end at the same time."

Her mother set her coffee mug on the counter. "Didn't you want to enrol in some extracurriculars this year?"

The underlying message was clearly discernible in her mother's words: It will keep you out of trouble to have your time occupied. "I suppose it would be good for college applications." Alexa admitted. "I'll ask around if any clubs accept applications this late in the year."

She finished her apple and cereal and put the bowl in the sink. "Let's go Soph, we need to be early, I have a schedule to pick up."

The drive to school was quiet, and if her nerves made Alexa push down on the gas pedal a little more than strictly necessary, Sophie did not mention it. After parking her car at the rapidly filling parking lot, she left Sophie with the nice-looking middle aged lady at the desk of Hawkins Middle School. She crossed the parking lot to Hawkins High. Going through the big double doors she was assaulted by a barricade of the sound and laughter of her peers greeting each other after the Christmas holidays. On the right of the entrance she found what she assumed to be the office she had to go to get her schedule. She knocked on the door which was already slightly ajar.

"Come in!" Sounded from within. She entered the room, which was currently only occupied by a bearded man of about fifty years old sitting behind a dusty desk.

"Hi, I'm looking to pick up my schedule." Alexa stated with a polite

smile.

“In that case you must be Alexa Clark.” He said, looking at her over his glasses. “I’m Terence Weaver. It’s not often we get new students in the middle of the schoolyear, two earlier this year, but often we go years without transfers. It was quite the hassle to fit you into the courses you want to take.” Alexa was well-aware of who the two other newbies in town were, and why they moved here.

“Did it all work out in the end though?”

“Well, your grades in your last school were decent enough that it wasn’t a problem to convince the teachers to allow you entrance to AP American History and AP World History, but there was no more room in Geography, so I put you in Biology instead. Is that all right with you miss Clark?”

It totally wasn’t, she sucked at all things science, but it would have to do. “Of course, sir, I’m sure it was a lot of trouble fitting me in anywhere, let alone in all my first choices. Thanks for trying.”

He handed her a slip of paper with the details of her schedule, then he looked up towards the open door. “Ah, hello miss Summers, you’re here to help miss Clark find her way around aren’t you? She’s all yours now.”

The girl that walked in had dark auburn hair kept in place with a pale yellow bow. She wore a dark grey corduroy pinafore and a matching yellow turtleneck underneath. She looked like one of the nice girls; perfect.

She extended her hand, which Alexa shook. “Susie Summers is the name, which, yes, was a terrible choice of name that my parents saddled me with. I’m here to help you around on your first day.” Her voice was soft and girly, well-suited to her looks.

“I mean, nothing bad about a little alliteration in the early morning right?” Alexa responded.

Susie gave her a look, “Yeah but every single morning, day, and night?”

Susie led her back to the main hallway as Alexa laughed “Fair point. I’m Alexa Clark by the way, but please call me Alex, all my friends do.”

Susie hooked her arm through Alexa’s, “Well then Alex, Where does first period lead you?”

“I have Social Sciences first.” Her newfound friend smiled at her, making the freckles that dotted her cheeks hit the light.

“Good, me too, let me warn you though, Mrs Norton’s a pretty okay teacher but she doesn’t let you get away with slacking off whatsoever, so make sure you do all your assignments and do them well.”

Susie turned out to be right. Once they arrived in class Mrs Norton didn’t sadistically make her awkwardly tell the class full of stone-faced teenagers all about herself. Instead, Alexa got away with a small wave and stating that she moved here from Indianapolis. She sat down on one of the two remaining empty seats, the one that was conveniently left next to Susie. When Mrs Norton was walking around distributing some handout Alexa heard a group of guys whispering behind her.

“Billy and that ginger sister of his are also from Indianapolis aren’t they? They might even know each other.”

Some other voice answered him, “Nah, that’s a big city ain’t it? Seems unlikely to me.”

Alexa tuned them out. Of course they would think that. They couldn’t possibly know she knew Billy very well, had gone to school with him for three years, had lived in the same neighbourhood even. There was a time when Alexa would have been glad to see Billy with her in this new town, where everything around her was foreign. That seemed like another life, but in reality they had only broken up the summer before.

“Alright class, let’s begin. If you’ve looked at your hand-outs you have seen that today we’ll be talking about what it means to be a part of a pluralistic society. Before the holidays we talked about another

term that describes such a society, does anyone remember what it is?" Alexa sighed. School was tedious no matter where it was located.

Alexa managed to get through her first classes without drawing too much attention to herself. Then third period rolled around. She glanced at her schedule; English it was. The school was small by comparison to her old one so she managed not to get lost on her way to the classroom, but she was still the last one there. She stepped through the doorway just as the last bell rang.

"I'm sincerely hoping you will not be making a habit out of being late Miss Clark." The wrinkled lady in front of the chalkboard said dryly. Susie had warned her about this one, apparently Mrs Ferguson was known to be unreasonable after dealing with unruly teenagers for what had to be at least four decades.

"I'm very sorry ma'am, I'm still trying to find my way around." She hoped her newcomer status would remain a valid excuse for a while. Mrs Ferguson's grin was anything but pleasant, all teeth and no warmth.

"It's a good thing there's only a spot left in the back. Go sit there with all the other troublemakers."

Alexa did her best not to look affronted. Did the old hag need to make such quick assumptions? Her eyes looked for the empty chair in the back, but what they found was a set of penetrating blue eyes gazing at her from the corner of the room. Of course she'd known he'd be here at school, and that it was incredibly likely they would have classes together, but somehow, unconsciously, she hadn't prepared to encounter him on her first day at school. Billy's eyes followed her as she made her way to the back, to the only available seat. Right next to him.